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# Reagan OKs sale of nuclear reactors to China

By Mary Belcher  
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President Reagan yesterday approved an agreement to sell nuclear power reactors to China, and administration officials cited "dramatic changes" in China's attitude toward nuclear proliferation.

However, some Republican and Democratic senators said they have been kept in the dark about the terms of the agreement and have questions about the possibility of the People's Republic of China selling nuclear material to Iran or other hostile Third World countries.

Aides to Sen Jesse Helms, R-N.C., and Sen. William Proxmire, D-Wis., expressed doubt last night that the agreement would sail through the Senate without serious questions.

Mr. Helms was said to be concerned about sending critical nuclear material to "a Communist dictatorship," and Sen. Proxmire was said to be concerned about how the pact can be verified and about the "reprocessing provisions" that might allow the Chinese to extract plutonium from spent reactor fuel.

Mr. Reagan announced the pact in a morning meeting at the White House with Chinese President Li Xiannian.

At a state dinner for the Chinese leader last night, Mr. Reagan also said Vice President Bush will visit China later this year at Mr. Li's request. The trip is expected to take place in October.

Mr. Reagan tentatively approved the nuclear cooperation pact when he visited China in April 1984. After it was initialed, however, intelligence specialists expressed concern that

## China might help Pakistan develop nuclear weapons.

Federal laws prohibit the United States from selling nuclear reactors to any country that helps third countries acquire nuclear weapons.

But Mr. Reagan is satisfied with China's nuclear non-proliferation policy, administration officials said.

Chinese officials have affirmed their support for nuclear safeguards in a series of public statements. China also has joined the International Atomic Energy Agency, which has stringent guidelines on the export of nuclear materials and technology.

"It's a dramatic change from the policy of only 10 or 15 years ago, when China took the view that it was every country's sovereign right to have nuclear weapons," said one senior administration official, who spoke to reporters on the condition that he not be identified.

"More importantly, over the last

few years in the course of these [nuclear cooperation pact] discussions, we've evolved with China a very close degree of understanding on the key issues involved," he said.

White House spokesman Edward Djerejian said the administration has carefully reviewed the matter for 14 months.

"This is not an agreement we're rushing headlong into," he said. "It's been reached in a very deliberate manner by both sides, and all the necessary assurances [have been made]."

Mr. Djerejian said the administration does not expect Congress to disapprove.

"It's our perspective that the People's Republic of China is a communist dictatorship and that we shouldn't support the economic and military development of communist states," said an aide to Sen. Helms.

"There's certainly no guarantee the [People's] Republic of China and the Soviet Union will not get together some day. If there is a change in leadership, there would be a change in interest. To think somehow communist China can be played against the Soviet Union — that logic is fundamentally flawed," Mr. Helms' aide said.

Members of both political parties noted that the United States was close to selling nuclear reactor equipment to Iran before the fall of the Shah.

"I think most are keeping in mind that a country can be your friend one

day and your enemy the next," an aide to a Democratic senator said.

"I think members are going to take a close look at this one because we're dealing with the second most powerful communist nation in the world," the aide said.

Congress can block a nuclear agreement if both chambers pass a concurrent resolution of disapproval. The president could veto the resolution, but Congress could override his veto by a two-thirds vote.

China plans to build two major nuclear power plants in the south. If the pact is approved, U.S. companies could bid on the work.

Energy Secretary John Herrington and Chinese Vice Premier Li Peng signed the nuclear cooperation accord in a ceremony at the State Department yesterday afternoon.

In the same ceremony, U.S. and Chinese officials signed three other accords, including an education exchange agreement, a cultural exchange plan and an international fisheries agreement.

In welcoming the Chinese president to the White House, Mr. Reagan said Sino-U.S. relations should be built on the Chinese principle, "hu jin, hu hui," which means "mutual respect, mutual benefit."

"Both our peoples should be proud that in a few short years a solid foundation of good will has been laid," Mr. Reagan said, making his first official appearance since a cancerous polyp was removed from his colon slightly more than a week ago.

"Ours is an increasingly productive relationship based not on personality or momentary concerns, but on a recognition that our nations share significant common interests," he said.

While there are differences between the United States and China, those differences should be kept in perspective, Mr. Reagan said.

Mr. Li, the first Chinese head of state to visit the United States, agreed that Sino-U.S. relations have made great strides since 1972, when the two nations pledged to work toward normalization of diplomatic relations.

"However, I wish to point out that

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in our relations there are even today great potentials to be tapped and obstacles and difficulties to overcome," he said, speaking through an interpreter.

Mr. Li, 76, said he was "deeply touched" by Mr. Reagan's participation in the welcoming ceremony on the White House lawn.

"I am very happy to see that you are recovering so fast," the Chinese president said.

Because Mr. Reagan is still recovering from intestinal surgery, the two leaders sat through each other's brief remarks. Mr. Reagan looked pale and gaunt.

The president, however, said he was feeling "fine" when reporters asked him about his health during a photo session with Mr. Li. Mr. Reagan left Bethesda Naval Hospital Saturday and has been maintaining a light schedule during his recovery.

In addition to the nuclear pact, Mr. Li and Mr. Reagan discussed U.S. arms-control talks with the Soviet Union, trade and economic concerns and problems between mainland China and Taiwan.

Mr. Reagan called for a peaceful resolution to continuing strife between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China, according to the senior administration official.

"We don't believe we should be an intermediary" in settling the differences, the official said.

Mr. and Mrs. Reagan hosted a White House dinner for Mr. Li and his entourage last night. In his toast to the Chinese president, Mr. Reagan called him "lao pengyou," or "old friend."

The 14-member Chinese delegation will leave Washington tomorrow for Chicago. Before leaving the United States, the officials will also stop in Los Angeles and Hawaii.

The delegation arrived in the United States Sunday after visiting Canada.

*Rita McWilliams contributed to this report.*